1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

(*c*) *In hunting*, deities other than the king's ancestors were invoked, especially *Hũvĩ*, the hunters' god, and *Kuanja*, a goddess, both of which had their own shrines and priests. These may have been connected with the country or with its earlier inhabitants (the kings being recognized as late comers). At the inaugural hunt the offices were assigned. The king's character was supposedly revealed by the sex of the animal killed at this hunt: 'If the duiker[1] is a female, then it is good indeed, but if a male, then the king is a real person but he habitually will become angry to excess' (*Nda ombambi yaco omange ciwa muẽlẽ, puaĩ nda ulume, Soma omunu puaĩ o tema tema enene*).

2. *To represent the nation in its external relations*, i.e. (*a*) *To make agreements with other kings to promote trade*, and (*b*) *To make war on other peoples* in order to provide his court with tribute and his warriors with plunder. The war leader (*Kesongo*) had his own residence and establishment entirely separate from that of the king, whom he must not meet face to face except on certain state occasions. In Bailundu he, with certain other officials, was of the stock of the slaves of the state (*ovinduli viosoma*) who came from Luandu in the Songo country. Each king must inaugurate his reign with a war, during or after which he must ceremonially 'eat the old one' (*oku lia ekongo*)—a feast consisting of the flesh of a specially fattened slave cooked with the flesh of the principal animals commonly eaten.

3. *To dispense justice*. In point of time consumed, this question was very important, for it occupied much of the time of both rulers and ruled. Good evidence of this is in the number of proverbs used at court, second only in number to those used for the education of the young. The king's court (*olusenje*) was the supreme court of the nation where cases were continually heard and 'fines eaten' (*oku lia ovimbu*). Cases might be settled either by ordeal or by decision of the king, and there was therefore room for appeal and re-trial. The king's word, however, was final, as the proverb has it: *O popia onganji, o mãlãpo osoma.* (The advocate speaks, the king finishes [decides].) The king was not generally arbitrary in his decisions but was bound not only by the customs of his people, but also by the desires of his councillors. Among the legitimate kings of the Ovimbundu there were comparatively few of the revolting and wholesale punishments which were so

[1] The duiker, *ombambi* (*Silvicapra grimmii leucoprosopus*).

regent and incarnation" of the spirits. Sacrifices were made at the royal shrine or *kakokoto* ("at the skulls"), where the skulls of past chiefs were kept, in order to:-

(i) control the elements i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of rain and avoid the dangers caused by storms; also to control fire by providing a new fire ceremonially kindled[1] from which everyone took his fire.

(ii) to ensure fertility, towards which the royal marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

(b) *To represent the country in its external relations*, principally to make trade agreements with other chiefs, or to make war on other peoples in order to get tribute and plunder. The war leader *(Kesongo)* has his own residence entirely separate from that of the king, whom he must not meet face to face except on certain ceremonial occasions.[2] Each king must inaugurate his reign with a war, during which or after which he must ceremonially "eat the old one" *(oku lia ekongo)* - who was usually a specially fattened slave cooked with the flesh of the principal animals commonly eaten.[3]

(c) *To dispense justice.* The chief's court or *olusenje* was the supreme court of the chiefdom. The chief had the final word in any case, but most chiefs acted according to custom.

(d) *To protect himself and the chiefdom*, the chief could use "magic" (?) which might have been accounted witchcraft or murder if practised without authority: e.g. the ritual murder of a pregnant woman, or of the children whose lives were required for building and furnishing the queen's kitchen.

(e) The chief made much use of divination in order to carry out his office. For this purpose he had his own diviner *(citue cosoma)*, who was of the blood royal; but he also consulted diviners of other regions and types.

Succession to chiefship is in the male line,[4] from father to son, elder brother to younger brother or brother's son, or sometimes to one more distantly related. The election is made by the councillors whose duty it is (?), ordinarily before the old chief's death is announced. These same councillors may depose an unpopular chief, and there have been many such depositions. This "democratic" tendency of the Ovimbundu has been noted by most writers. Childs points out that it is attested by the fact that a chief (formerly as well as today) works in his own fields, and by folk-tales which give incidental and intimate pictures of petty details in the lives of the chiefs†

(1) See above, p.26.
(2) In Bailundu he, with certain other officials, was of the stock of slaves of the state *(ovindili viosoma)*.
(3) Childs, p.21. Many early writers refer to the cannibalism of the "Jagas" or "Imbangalas" who are thought to have been the Ovimbundu chiefs. (See above, p.8, and also Lacerda and Lavenstein, quoted by Childs, pp.17ff.)
(4) But *inheritance* is said to follow a different line among chiefs from among commoners; possibly inheritance is also in the paternal line. See Childs p.18.

† See footnote 1, p. 31

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

undu, and Ngalangi are said to have had conflicts. In time past, as at the present day, a king reigned over territory which was extensive but definitely delimited for purposes of administration. Encroachment of one king on the rights of taxation and administration of another led to raids and reprisals. Village chiefs collected taxes in the form of agricultural produce and gave these to the king, who personally visited a village from which payments had not been made. A folklore story begins, "The people had not paid taxes so the king came to the village and told them a parable."

A king, if young, accompanied his people on the warpath. There was, however, a permanent leader named *kesongo*, a derivative from *songola* ("to lead"). The declaration of war, likewise the tactics, were discussed by a council of *olosekulu* ("village chiefs") in the *ombala* ("capital") where the king had, and still has, a royal compound. If war had been conducted among sections of the Ovimbundu, the defeated people had to pay taxes and tribute; moreover, their women and cattle were taken. In event of a successful war against the Vachokue there was plundering of cattle and women, but it was not found practicable to exact periodical payments from the enemy.

The subject of warfare is intimately related to that of slavery. There was until very recent times a domestic slavery which followed from the inability of a person to pay his debts. In connection with this reduction of free persons to a condition of slavery there are several points of exceptional interest. The debtor himself is not taken as a slave, neither are his wife or children. The correct procedure is a sale of his sister's children; but more frequently the children themselves are taken by the creditor. "The debtor's sister will say nothing because this is the law of the Ovimbundu." If payment of the debt is made later, the children are set free. Usually the word pawning is used by ethnologists to describe this proceeding.

Further consideration of Ngonga's payment to his mother's brother clarifies the facts of domestic slavery. "I paid for them, I took their place," said my interpreter. The payment for the return of these two children was two oxen. The girl, who was ten years of age when she was taken to pay the debt, was returned to her people when she was a woman with three children. Ngonga's brother was not actually taken from his home. He was made to pay his mother's brother's debt by working for the creditor. In general, these domestic slaves were not ill treated, though their rights were limited. The position of slaves taken from a hostile